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Flodu in the Franks Casket's Whale Poem: A Fluvial Meaning with Regional Implications

Alcuin (ca. 735-804) frames his famous York Poem with references to the Roman-built seaport at York.[1] To reach that port, lying some fifty miles inland from the sea, ships traveled from the Humber Estuary up the river Ouse. The channeling effect of this complex waterway affects the height and speed of the tides as they flow inland and then out again, and a miscalculation about the rapid outflow of the tide in such a river channel as the Ouse could result in the stranding of a ship, or, as this essay suggests, in the imagined stranding of a whale, as on the rune-carved Franks Casket. The problematic runic letter representing *-u* at the end of the word *flodu* in the poem on the front of the casket is a long-standing crux that may be solved by attention to fluvial dynamics such as that of the river Ouse.

The Franks Casket is a small Anglo-Saxon box made in the early-to-mid eighth century from the bone of a whale. On it are densely carved illustrations of six stories with associated inscriptions written mainly in runes in the Northumbrian dialect.[2] The runic inscriptions on the front and right side are in alliterative verse, small poems respectively two and three lines long; the rest are in prose, with some labels within the picture panels. In the two-line poem on the front, the subject of this article, the box tells a tale about its own construction. The poem begins at top left of that panel and circles around the panel to the right, framing it. The first line of the poem, alliterating on f, crosses along the top of the panel and ends on the right

side, and the second verse-line, alliterating on g, flows in a single line right to left along the bottom in retrograde with the letters reversed (mirror-writing). An extrametrical word, *hronæs-ban*, goes up the left side. The runes are transliterated and arranged in verse-lines below, followed by Ralph W. V. Elliott's translation[3]:

Fisc flodu ahof on fergenberig;

warþ gasric grorn, þær he on greut giswom.

Hronæs ban.

The flood lifted up the fish on to the cliff-bank;

the whale became sad, where he swam on the shingle.

Whale's bone.

The poem records the first stage in a temporal sequence about a whale, with the living, anxious beast stranded then becoming bone (*hronæs-ban*).[4] What follows for the bone is implied: it is harvested, made into a box, and carved with pictures and runes, including this self-reflective poem about the whale's stranding.

Representing the casket itself, the story of the whale's bone is not illustrated as are the other inscriptions, but it is matched thematically by the illustration of "The Vengeance of Weland" on the left side of the front panel; the picture shows that imprisoned craftsman working with bone he has likewise harvested, but this bone is a skull. Weland has murdered a son of the king who has captured and crippled him, and the headless corpse lies under his forge. Having carved the boy's bone into a vessel, the smith now

offers a drink from this “skull-cup” to the victim’s unaware sister, who reaches out her hand to receive it.[5] The word *ban* (“bone”), as it ascends behind this bone-carver’s back, thus has a twofold reference: to Weland and to the whale whose ossification results in the casket itself.[6] Similarly redoubled themes are a feature of this intellectually demanding box.[7] “There are few objects from the early eighth century which are as self-consciously clever as the Franks Casket,” as Ian Wood observes,[8] and numerous scholars have attempted to solve its many riddles. The subject now to be pursued is simpler, however: the grammatical crux of *flodu,* and how the stranding of the whale could have occurred.

1. The Stranding of the Whale

This question of agency, reflecting an aspect of the poem alluding to an actual whale, or a whale imagined realistically, involves the grammar of the runic letter representing *-u* at the end of the first two words of the poem: *fisc flodu.* The inflection represented by that terminal u has been considered a philological problem for over a century. The runologist R. I. Page offers his “suspicion that *flodu* is an irregular plural and that the [casket] carver may have added the final letter to fill a large space in his inscriptional panel, knowing of neuter plurals in -u.” Preferring then to take *fisc* as the grammatical subject of the sentence and *flodu* as the object, Page concludes, “The text, as I take it, means: ‘The fish beat up the sea(s) on to the mountainous cliff.’”[9] Page’s high reputation lends authority to his interpretation of this verse line, and his translation is often quoted. Not

everyone accepts his S-O-V syntax, however, because with the “fish” (whale) being stranded, Page’s conclusion that *flodu* is the object of the verb *ahof* leaves the sentence difficult to parse.[10] Britt Mize explains the issue succinctly: “It is unclear on morphological grounds which of the words *fisc* and *flodu* is the subject of the [verb *ahof*]*;* serious problems exist with both construals. However, semantics determines *flodu* almost certainly to be the subject and *fisc* the object,” and he translates the line accordingly: “The sea cast the fish onto a mountain.”[11] Most would agree with Mize that, in this line about an animal being stranded, the word *flodu* is the logical subject of a clear statement: The *flodu* heaved the *fisc* up onto the *fergenberig*. But Mize’s insistence on a semantic solution does not address the grammatical problem of the terminal –*u* of *flodu*.

The source of the problem is the universal assumption that the word’s gender is masculine: if *flodu* is a form of the masculine noun *flod* (‘sea’), the construction with –*u* is a crux. No one seems to have considered the possibility that the gender of the word *flodu* might not be masculine. A grammatically analogous sentence in the Exeter Book poem editorially titled “The Husband’s Message” suggests this alternative possibility. The object-subject-verb syntax of lines 19b-20a of that poem, *Hine fæhþo adraf of sigeþeode* (“Feud drove him away from the victory-people”)[12] is identical to the O-S-V + prepositional phrase of *fish flodu ahof on fergenberig*, and both sentences also share the feature of a preposition preposited to the verb:

a-draf and *a-hof* (“drove away” and “heaved upward”). According to the DOE (Dictionary of Old English), which presents the headword as *fæhþe,* this word for “feud” is a weak feminine noun with examples showing a nominative form that can end in -e or -o (cp. *fæhðo* at *Beowulf* line 2999). With the accusative pronoun *hine* preceding it, no one has trouble reading *fæhþo* as the subject of the sentence in “The Husband’s Message”: feud drove *him* away. But on the Franks Casket, the masculine noun *fisc,* unlike the pronoun *hine,* does not distinguish between nominative and accusative forms. Nor does the masculine noun *flod*, which does not possess any form *flodu*. There is, however, a weak feminine noun similar to *flod* but ending in e in the dictionary (nominative) form: *flode,* “a channel where water flows.” The DOE notes that this word mainly occurs late as a boundary marker in Anglo-Saxon charters, and no manuscript form ending in terminal –*u*, like the word on this Northumbrian box, is recorded. In his discussion of the irregularity of weak declension n-stems, however, Eduard Sievers points out that final vowels in the early Northumbrian dialect tended to be more fluid than their later equivalents, and “the feminines are still more irregular.” In the nominative singular these feminine nouns generally end in e, but sometimes in a, and the nominative plural can end in a, o, e, or, by analogy with the strong masculines, in as. But then Sievers adds, “In distinction from the rest, *eorðu* “earth,” has, for the most part, -u, -o instead of the other final vowels ennumerated above.”[13] There exists an adjective derived from *flod* that can also end in –*u*. In the Old English translation of Orosius IV,7, the adjective

flede (“flooded”) has a final *-u* when inclined to agree with the gender of the Roman river name Tiber: *þa wearð Tiber seo ea swa fledu*.[14] This analogy suggests that the Franks Casket word *flodu* found in the dictionary as *flode* may be a derived form of *flod* connected with rising waters, perhaps specifically in a river.[15] The word may have been unusual to the casket designer if he was not a river man (in fact, in those days it may have only existed orally in local speech), so that the casket artist associated it by analogy with a weak feminine noun like *eorðu* or the adjective *fledu* modifying a feminine noun.[16]

This philological speculation about the unique word *flodu* finds support from wave mechanics, in this case the effect on the flow when an incoming tide is compressed between riverbanks. If the word on the Franks Casket is an early form of the specialist term *flode* associated with words for “channel” in the glossaries, could the Northumbrian usage refer to an inland tidal phenomenon powerful enough to lift a whale, such as a tidal bore? A tidal bore (cp. Old Norse *bára,* “wave, billow”) is created by a body of water that travels up a narrowing estuary with the high tide, then funnels into a river channel to rise into a wave running upstream against the river’s normal flow. It can be noisy and quite striking.[17] Anyone familiar with the letters of Aldhelm (ca. 639-709) is likely to think at this point of his description of a voyage across the Irish Sea and apparently up the Severn Channel and river toward Malmesbury, encountering the famous Severn Bore (*dodrans*) along the way: *caerula trans ponti glauca inormesque dodrantium glareas atque*

spumiferas limphae obstirpationes.[18] George Dempsey translates these lines: "across the sparkling blue of the sea and the looming gravel of the tidal bore [*dodrantium*] and the foaming wave-caps of clear water."[19] The Severn Bore, funneling the tide of the Bristol Channel up into the Severn River, is rated among the most powerful tidal bores in the world, and nowadays surfers ride the wave produced by its surge at spring tides. A tidal bore closer to the casket's northern home is the widely-known Trent Aegir south of the Humber Estuary, its ancient name preserving the word *aegur* or *egor,* familiar as a compound-element to readers of *Beowulf* (*eagorstream,* "sea," at line 519), and several times equated with Latin *dodrans* in early glossaries.[20]

In discussing the Latin word *dodrans,* referring to a tidal bore, Alan K. Brown quotes and translates from the A-text of the mid-seventh century *Hisperica Famina* lines 396-98 about the rising tide, called by the Insular Latin term *mallina* (a term for tide used also by Bede):

> The foaming, swelling *mallina* regularly (399) attacks and plucks at the muddy shores (399-401); it drowns the vast channels with its swellng *dodrans* (bore; 402), it washes ashore driftwood (?) and seaweed (403-404), tears shellfish from the rocks (405-406), casts many species of sea-monsters on the sands (407), and beats upon the *termopilae,* the cliffs and crags, of the shore (408).[21]

Brown concludes concerning *dodrans* that it is "possible to assign a meaning to the word: 'tidal wave' in all of the senses in which the phrase has been popularly used, including both waves and bores (eagres) actually produced

by the rising tide, and rare cataclysmic inundations”—such as the biblical Flood.[22] The Franks Casket whale suffering on the *greot* (sand) could have come directly out of the vivid scene with stranded sea-monsters in the *Hisperica Famina* passage translated above.

The dictionary definition of *flode* as “a channel where water flows” might well define a narrowing river. “Philippus’” description, quoted by Brown, of “the twice daily Ocean tide rushing violently with its *dodrans* […] up into the rivers of the world”[23] sounds very like the massive surge of water rushing up the Humber Estuary twice a day and formerly (before impediments) flowing upriver all the way to York and beyond, at some points achieving a speed of eight knots (9+ mph). The tidal flow up into the Ouse does not possess a bore so notable as that on the nearby Trent, but the smaller cetaceans used to travel up it even to the seaport at York, sometimes becoming stranded along the way. In recent years, as fish begin to flourish again in the now less contaminated waters, hungry cetaceans are following them into these rivers.[24] The Humber has in fact been called a “hotspot” for modern whale strandings,[25] and the North Sea itself has recently been described specifically as “a sperm whale trap.”[26] Thus a whale, especially one of a smaller species, that had gone astray in the North Sea might swim up the channel on the north side of the Humber Estuary, “the deepest water for miles around,”[27] then follow the flow of the rising tide where it seemed to be moving freely up the shallower river. Recent researchers believe that the Norsemen sailed, or more precisely floated,

then rowed, up the Ouse river on the fast-flowing incoming tide to engage just south of York in the Battle of Fulford of 1066 that preceded the better known battles at Stamford Bridge and Hastings. Their authenticating video showing a boat moving quickly up this flow is impressive.[28] In more peaceful times, according to the York archaeologist Colin Briden:

> The water-borne commerce of both [York and Selby] depended before the age of steam not merely on the existence of the river but on the powerful tides that moved up and down the river, carrying all before them. The pattern of these tides seems, in three thousand years, to have changed only in detail, adjusted here and there by changing sea levels, the raising of levees and embankments, and the draining of wetlands."[29]

These northern English rivers like the Ouse and Trent provide ample opportunity for a poet's imagined whale to beach itself on a stretch of shore.

The means by which the poet imagined the whale being stranded is the more modest concern of this essay, but answering this question of agency is more likely to locate the poet than the whale. What powerful surge of water flowing up a river against the normal downstream current would a Northumbrian poet have found familiar? If *flodu* is the nominative form of a feminine noun related to the masculine noun *flod* but evoking channeled water, then perhaps the poet was thinking of anything from a tidal bore to the astonishing equinoctial spring tide (nothing to do with springtime) rushing up the rivers leading to and beyond York.[30] As the Ouse was

considered an important “highway” even in later medieval times,[31] the tidal surge on that Yorkshire river may be understood as the *flodu* most likely to have been known to the poet. This tentative localization allows us to ponder further.

2. The River Ouse and the Possible Origin of the Franks Casket

What follows may be considered an extension of Ian Wood’s 1990 suggestion that the Frankish-style monastery that Bishop Wilfrid I (633-709) ordered to be constructed at Ripon would be a plausible site for manufacture of the Franks Casket (more about his argument below).[32] Ripon lies upstream from York on the banks of the river Ure, an extension of the Ouse, so travel up the Ouse was the way to get to Ripon, whether coming from Francia or elsewhere. It is also the most likely route by which Bede came to visit his friend Bishop Egbert at York in the year 733.

Bede begins his famous letter to Egbert, an epistle more realistically described as a treatise and commonly thought to be the last item of significance that he wrote, with a rare allusion to himself traveling:

> I remember how you said last year, when I was staying for some days in your monastery for purposes of study, that when you came back there again this year [734] you would like to be able to have a talk to me about our common interests in learning.[33]

Bede’s journey from Jarrow to Egbert’s monastery at York would have most sensibly been by water, perhaps at ease on a merchant ship plying goods from *portus Ecfrid* at Jarrow to the seaport at York, *Euboricae ad portum,*

rather than along the difficult eighty or more miles by land with at least one notably problematic river crossing.[34] If Bede had chosen also to visit the monastery at Ripon (which nothing suggests that he did), he would have pressed some twenty-five miles onward up the river past where it turns into the Ure near the Domesday Book village of Linton-on-Ouse, or along a road beside those rivers. York and Ripon were cities famous in early Anglo-Saxon times for their monasteries and those associated with them. Ripon was associated especially with Bishop Wilfrid, and York flourished under Bishop Egbert, made Archbishop in 735. (His brother Eadbert became king two years later, and the brothers were close.) The extended two-part river was the best route to both places. Considering these associations, the recognition of a possible allusion to the rising tide of the Ouse in the word *flodu* may add another tentative piece toward solving the Franks Casket puzzle.

In “Ripon, Francia and the Franks Casket in the Early Middle Ages,” Ian Wood suggests that—

> a history could be constructed for the Franks Casket beginning at Ripon, whence it was taken by Frithegod, who left it to the church of Brioude, where it was found during the French Revolution. Although this hypothetical chain of events is extremely tenous, it does draw attention to certain aspects of the monastic culture of Northumbria, outside the purview of Bede’s writings; that is, belonging neither to the intellectual world of Bede himself, no[r] to the apparently more secular

> milieu of the bogus monasteries, condemned in the letter to Ecgbert [Egbert].[35]

In his conclusion Wood observes that “Ripon can be seen as a monastic institution which belongs to the mainstream of monastic history in the seventh and early eighth centuries.”[36] While Wood implies, without being explicit, that the Ripon monastery would be a suitable milieu for the creation of the casket, much the same argument would apply to Egbert’s monastery in York, downriver from Ripon. The course of the highway rivers suggests that Wilfrid’s masons and others bringing “Francia” to Ripon might have stopped over in York before proceeding on the last leg of their journey; and nearer to mid-century, York itself might be the preferred destination. Alcuin’s York poem celebrates the interest of Bishop Wilfrid II (718-32; d.744) in adorning the church at York and that of Archbishop Egbert after him (732-66) in acquiring foreign artworks and displaying them there; see lines 1222-29 and 1267-8 of the poem, respectively. (Alcuin himself brings back metaphysical goods from the Continent in lines 1649-51.) Such wide-ranging activity would provide a welcoming intellectual climate for the creation of an object like the highly literate casket.

The interest of all three eighth-century bishops (Wilfrid I, Wilfrid II, and Egbert) in acquiring elegant objects brings us to an observation by the British Museum art historian Leslie Webster about the horse on the casket’s right side. Photographs in her book show a horse having a triple knot (*triquetra*) under his stomach and another between his two front legs.[37] Some would associate the *triquetra* allusion, clearly significant in some way, with Odin’s horse Sleipnir as displayed on the Gotland picture-stone at Tjängvide,

arguing from this that the symbol indicated the horse's supernatural function.[38] But a reference closer to home is suggested when Webster includes, on the same two-page spread as her photograph of the Tjängvide horse, the photograph of a silver coin, a *sceatta* minted for King Eadbert of Northumbria,[39] mentioned above; he reigned from 737 to 758 and perhaps had that coin minted early in his reign.[40] Shown on the coin's reverse is a highly stylized quadruped, usually identified as a horse, with a *triquetra* between its legs, a design imitating a coin of King Aldfrith similarly showing beast and *triquetra*.[41] Webster reasonably asks, "Could the resemblance between the horse image on the casket and this Northumbrian regal symbol link the casket directly to a Northumbrian king?" Then she immediately dismisses what seems to me a plausible idea for one that is less so, insisting that it "seems more likely that the appearances of this horse with distinctive triple knots reflect a common Germanic tradition, possibly relating to Odin, rather than any direct connection between the casket and the Northumbrian royal dynasty."[42] However, the numismatist Anna Gannon demonstrates association of this beast with continental imagery,[43] which returns us to Wood's argument about influences that he indicates even in his title, "Ripon, Francia and the Franks Casket." At the very least, the two animals marked as significant by triquetrae link coin and casket and further suggest a connection with Eadbert; the king himself may be using the image to foster by means of iconography an association with King Aldfrith, as he hoped to revive the past glory of Aldfrith's Northumbria.[44] When King Eadbert

abdicated from the Northumbrian throne in 758, perhaps despairing of that by-then fruitless effort, he sought peace for the rest of his life with his brother Archbishop Egbert, in the latter's monastery at York.

Identification of the word *flodu* as a reference to a fluvial phenomenon, vividly exemplified by the Ouse with its harbor at York, when combined with Wood's speculations about Ripon (upstream from York) and Webster's association of the horse on the Franks Casket with King Eadbert's silver coin may add up to something more substantial than any one of these suggestive items presented alone. While none offers more than a speculative glimpse of the Franks Casket's provenance, the three items intriguingly appear to reinforce each other in terms of possible location and date.

In presenting the Franks Casket's despairing whale as *grorn þær he on greut geswom* ("sad where he swam on the gravel"), hopelessly aground because of the *flodu* he thought it was safe to follow, the poet who imagined him there reveals an ecologically-aware moment surprising for his time. But when the *flodu* that lifted up the *fisc* and cast it onto a riverbank (poetically exaggerated into a mountainside: *fergenberig*) is identified as a channel-focused surge of water, this opens up additional ways of thinking between disciplines, with special attention to geography, about where the creature's betrayal by water could plausibly take place. The most likely identification of the imagined river leads in turn to speculation about the origins of the casket itself.[45]

[1] Lines 27-29 and 1649-51 of *The Bishops, Kings, and Saints of York,* edited and translated by Peter Godman (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982), pp. 4-7 and 132-33. For a brief summary of Roman efforts to control waterways, see Roger D. Masters, *Fortune is a River* (New York: Free Press (Simon & Schuster), 1998), 11-15, although he does not mention the Roman harbor at York. It remained a viable port for merchant ships until the sixteenth century, and nowadays pleasure boats can still navigate upriver to York and beyond (a lock south of the city makes the river beyond it no longer tidal).

[2]Two stories are illustrated on the front and one each on lid, left and right side, and back. Leslie Webster's article "The Iconographic Programme of the Franks Casket"g in *Northumbria's Golden Age,* eds. Jane Hawkes and Susan Mills (Stroud: Sutton, 1999), 227-46, marked a turning-point in study of the casket, and her book *The Franks Casket: Objects in Focus* (London: The British Museum Press, 2012) offers the best general introduction to its provenance, the carvings with their stories, and its possible interpretation. The Babelstone site provides online access to the pictures on the panels along with the runic inscriptions interpreted and translated: http://www.babelstone.co.uk/Fonts/FranksCasket.html.

[3] *Runes: An Introduction* (Manchester U Press, 1971), 99.

[4] Attention to the whale's subjective feelings (*grorn*) qualifies this brief text to be identified as the earliest extant "animal poem" in English. Britt Mize uses this "mood of a stranded whale" as entry to the topic of his book, *Traditional Subjectivities: The Old English Poetics of Mentality* (U of Toronto Press, 2013), 5-6.

[5] Webster briefly tells this and the other stories on the Franks Casket in her book cited in note 2.

[6] Catherine E. Karkov observes and comments on most of these features in *The Art of Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2011), 148-9. The bone provided by this stranded whale would have been especially valuable in the eighth century when obtaining ivory became difficult after Muslim conquests interfered with trade from Africa; see Carol Neuman de Vegvar, "*Hronæs ban*: Exoticism and Prestige in Anglo-Saxon Material Culture," in *The Maritime World of the Anglo-Saxons,* ed Stacy S. Klein, William Schipper, and Shannon Lewis-Simpson (Tempe: ACMRS Press, 2014), 323-335. Today humans flock to help stranded whales return to the sea.

[7] On the front of the box alone, themes criss-cross between the smith making his vengeful *treasures* and the Magi bringing *gifts* to the Christ Child, while the alliteration on f and g in the two lines of the poem that frame the stories evoke the names of the runes *feoh* (wealth) and *gifu* (gift); for discussion see Richard Abels, "What Has Weland to Do with Christ: The Franks Casket and the Acculturation of Christianity in Early Anglo-Saxon England," *Speculum* 84 (2009), 558-561. Moreover, Weland, the Magi and the whale are all far from the safety of home, but the smith will soon fly away to his home and the Magi will return to their home by a different route, both thereby avoiding two wrathful rulers: the king who has crippled Weland when he hears his son has been murdered, and Herod, when he learns the Magi have fled, because he wanted to learn from them the Christ Child's location in order to kill him. As we who know their stories are aware, Weland and the Magi live on. But the whale, also displaced from his home (in the sea), will die.

[8] "Ripon, Francia and the Franks Casket in the Early Middle Ages," *Northern History,* 26 (1990), 1-19; 5.

[9] *An Introduction to English Runes,* 2nd ed. (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1999), 175.

[10] For example, in *A Phonology of Old English Runic Inscritpions with a Concise Edition of the Pre-Old English Inscriptions and a Concise Edition of the Old English Inscriptions and an Analysis of Graphemes* (forthcoming), Gaby Waxenberger argues with thorough attention to the grammar of the masculine noun *flod* that Franks Casket *–u* represents the ending *–um* indicating an instrumental; thus the *fisc* rises onto the mountain "by means of" the *flodu[m].*

[11] Mize, *Traditional Subjectivities,* p. 4 and n. 4 (same page). See also his article "The Meaning of 'Fisc Flodu Ahof' on the Franks Casket," *Notes and Queries* 256 (2011), 373-78.

[12] *The Exeter Book* (Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records, Vol. III), ed. George Philip Krapp and Elliott Van Kirk Dobbie (New York: Columbia U Press, 1936), 226.

[13] Sievers qualifies his statement that this is "always the case" with one exception "in R.1 [Rushworth Gloss], which still possesses a few forms in –an, even in the feminine." *An Old English Grammar*, trans. Albert S. Cook (Boston: Ginn, Heath and Co., 1885), paragraph 276, p. 138, n. 2.

[14] DOE sv. *flede*. The Old English Orosius also has the fem. nom. sing. adjective *fledu* agreeing with a river name in the phrase *þonne heo fledu wæs*.

[15] The centuries-later poet of "The Battle of Maldon" (a battle fought in 991) found no problem in using the masculine noun *flod* to describe first the incoming tidal flow up the Panta (Blackwater) river as a *flowende flod æfter ebban* (line 65) and a few lines later, when the tide goes out again, *se flod ut gewat* (line 72): *The Battle of Maldon,* ed. E.V. Gordon (New York: Appleton-Century Crofts, 1966), 47.

[16] The term could be local to a particular river, or coined by analogy by the Franks Casket carver himself, perhaps led by the desire for alliteration on f.

[17] For a specialist's explanation of this phenomenon in language available to a non-scientist, see Hubert Chanson, "Environmental fluid dynamics of tidal bores: Theoretical considerations and field observations," freely available online with fine illustrative photographs at http://staff.civil.uq.edu.au/h.chanson/reprints/bookcg_chapter10_tidal_bore.pdf.

[18] *Aldhelmi Opera,* ed. Rudolf Ehwald, MGH, Auctores Antiquissimi 15 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1919), 489.

[19] Personal communication of 1/29/2018; cf., George Dempsey, *Aldhelm of Malmesbury and the Ending of Late Antiquity* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), pp. 49 and 191. Dempsey notes that"the citations of *dodrans* are all Irish" (49, n. 82).

[20] Under *égor* the DOE cites eleven occurrences in glossaries; for example in the *Erfurt Glossary* 316: *dodrans: aegur*. Other bores are associated with Morecambe Bay in Cumbria and with rivers in Yorkshire and Lancashire.

[21] "Bede, a Hisperic Etymology, and Early Sea Poetry*," Medieval Studies* 37 (1975), 425.

[22] Brown, "Bede," 432.

[23] "Bede," 432, where he refers to Philippus's commentary on *Job*. In his note 15 Brown mentions the suggestion that this Philippus was "a disciple of Jerome's, and possibly Gaulish," and in Note 17 he says that "the most accessible text" of his commentary "is that of the shorter of the two principal recensions: PL 26.796-97."

[24] These are probably individuals, but the excavation of animal bones at a site active from the seventh to tenth centuries near Flixborough, a village up the Trent from the Humber Estuary, suggests a population in those earlier times.

“The sheer quantity of cetacean remains (primarily *T. truncates*) found at the site is exceptional (157 specimens), and their presence across all strata indicates their usage by the inhabitants over the entire 400 years of occupation at the site. We consider and exclude the possibility that the Flixborough dolphins may have been caught and killed elsewhere in the UK” (Courtney Nichols, Jerry Herman, Oscar E. Gagiotti, Keith M. Dobney, Kim Parsons and A. Rus Hoelzel, “Genetic isolation of a now extinct population of bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*),” *Proceedings of the Royal Society B* 274 [2007], 1611). Although focused neither so early nor so locally, Mark Gardiner’s “The Exploitation of Sea-Mammals in Medieval England: Bones and their Social Context,” *Archaeological Journal,* 154 (1997), 173-80, is an insightful examination of the possession and consumption of cetaceans, classified as “royal fish” from ca. 1000, as marking elevated social status.

[25] ‘Why is Humber becoming a Hot Spot for whale strandings?’: http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-humber-15115322,

[26] J.H. Nielen, *The Perfect Storm: Can Sperm Whale (Physeter macrocephalus) Strandings in the North Sea Be Linked to Storm Activity?* (Utrecht University Master Thesis, 5 January 2018), 3. Vicki Ellen Szabo’s educated guess based on “the size, thickness and density of the panels,” is that the Franks Casket bone “is almost certainly sperm whale mandible,” *Monstrous Fishes and the Mead-Dark Sea: Whaling in the Medieval North Atlantic* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 55, n. 79. Caroline Esser-Miles argues in the section “Hwæl or Hran” of her article “’King of the Children of Pride’: Symbolism, Physicality, and the Old English Whale” that Anglo-Saxons in the know distinguished between the large *hwæl* and the smaller cetaceans called *hronas,* in *The Maritime World of the Anglo-Saxons*, ed Stacy S. Klein, William Schipper, and Shannon Lewis-Simpson (Tempe: ACMRS

Press, 2014), 297. In naming the creature *hron*, the Franks Casket carver of this elite material might not have been among those who made such clear distinctions.

[27] Colin Briden, “Early Navigation on the Lower Ouse”: http://www.battleoffulford.org.uk/ev_tidal_ouse.htm

[28] **“**Riccall and the tidal surge - A prelude to the 1066 battle of Fulford”: **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vMy04zZL6hk**.

[29] “York as a Tidal Port” (from the conclusion): http://www.battleoffulford.org.uk/ev_york_tidal.htm,

[30] Described in detail by Briden in “York as a Tidal Port.’” The highest of these “spring tides” (i.e., upward-leaping waters) occurs in September.

[31] A document from the reign of Edward III (1327-1377) begins, “Whereas the water of Ouse is a highway and the greatest of all the Kings rivers within the kingdom of England, and is for the use of merchants in ships with divers merchandise from the high sea to the City of York…” (quoted in *The Early Yorkshire Woolen Trade: Extracts from the Hull Customs’ Roles,* ed. John Lister (Cambridge U Press, 1924), xvii.

[32] For Wood, see note 8 above.

[33] *Bede: The Ecclesiastical History of the English People, The Greater Chronicle, Bede’s Letter to Egbert,* trans. Judith McClure and Roger Collins (Oxford U Press, 1999, 2008), 343.

[34] Margaret Harvey discusses the difficulties of such travel in “Travel from Durham to York (and Back) in the Fourteenth Century,” *Northern History* 42 (2005), 119-130. Going overland from Jarrow to York would not have been much different in the eighth century.

[35] Wood, 17.

[36] Wood, 18.

[37] See Webster, *Franks Casket,* plates 14 and 34.

[38] For example, by Wolfgang Krause in "Erta, ein anglischer Gott," *Die Sprache* 5, (1959), 46-54.

[39] Webster, *Franks Casket,* 52-53.

[40] Joanna Story suggests that the coin was minted early in Eadbert's reign, in *Carolingian Connections: Anglo-Saxon England and Carolingian Francia, c. 750-870* (London: Routledge, 2003), 23.

[41] For a numismatic discussion of these regnal coins see James Booth, "Notes on the Keith Chapman Collection of Northumbrian Silver Sceattas: *c.* 700-*c.* 788," in Tony Abramson, ed. *Studies in Early Medieval Coinage, 2: New Perspectives* (Cambridge: Boydell Press, 2011), 196-97. Booth observes that the "'fantastic animal' [of the Aldfrith coins] mixes elements of stag, lion and horse" (194), and the three-pronged tail of the beast is certainly that of a lion as found in manuscript art. Anna Gannon defines Aldfrith's beast as a *lion courant* in *The Iconography of Early Anglo-Saxon Coinage: Sixth to Eighth Centuries* (Oxford U Press, 2010), 126. To me, the horned animal on these coins more readily recalls the horned horse on Migration Age bracteates. The images on both the coins and the bracteates derive ultimately from earlier continental sources, mainly Roman.

[42] *Franks Casket,* 52-53. The symbol might well have been appropriated for dynastic use specifically because it appeared to be "Germanic," just as Woden was incorporated into later Anglo-Saxon dynastic lists under Christian kings. Rene Trilling discusses the dual perspective necessary for exactly such adoption of "pagan" ancestral forms for Christian use in *The Aesthetics of Nostalgia: Historical Representation in Old English Verse* (University of Toronto

Press, 2009).

[43] Gannon, *Iconography,* 126-27.

[44] King Eadbert may have hoped to achieve this reform in part by attending to concerns about the pseudo-monasteries such as those expressed by Bede in his *Letter to Egbert*. See D.J.V. Fisher, *The Anglo-Saxon Age c.400-1042* (London: Longman, 1973), 151.

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